

Matt Wedel/Mary-Anne Wensley: Otherworldly Terrain

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, HALIFAX MAR 7 TO APR 11 2009



Matt Wedel *Pink boy* and *Gold girl* Both 2009 Photo Steve Farmer
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Delicate materials are turned into fantastical mindscapes in exhibitions by [Matt Wedel](#) and Mary-Anne Wensley, both currently on view at [Saint Mary's University Art Gallery](#).

Wedel fills the gallery's main space with a sculptural array of cast-ceramic plant and rock forms "inspired" by the landscapes of southern California. Any display of desert flora and fauna is bound to seem exotic, if slightly surreal, for those of us in northern climes at winter's end. But Wedel takes his installation into the realm of a science-fiction terraform by exaggerating both the blooming shapes and psychedelic colouring of his cactus-like organic structures and crystalline rock bases. Adding to the off-kilter atmosphere of the exhibition is a new set of Wedel's eyebrow-raising [ceramic sculptures](#) of children, which, as curator Robin Metcalfe points out, pose certain questions about gender stereotypes while being keenly informed by American folk-art traditions.



Installation view of Matt Wedel's exhibition at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery 2009
 Photo Steve Farmer

On view concurrently is Wensley's *inescapable shelter*, a delicately constructed "safe house" built entirely from translucent pig intestine. The work is a sculptural test of integrity, serving as a physical refuge both structurally and metaphorically. It's a duality that Metcalfe neatly sums up in his foreword to the forthcoming exhibition catalogue: "The title of *inescapable shelter* conjures up the contradictory notion of both

an inescapable need for shelter and a shelter from which one seeks, in vain, to escape: in other words, a prison.” (923 Robie St, Halifax NS)

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Mary-Anne Wensley *inescapable shelter* 2009 Photo Steve Farmer

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